

Derek Nunney brings new style to college

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI
Academics—college presidents, for example—are supposed to be high brow.

But Derek N. Nunney, Oakland Community College's (OCC) interim president, is no high brow.

Nunney is direct and simple—a contrast to his predecessor and longtime friend, Joseph E. Hill, who one acquaintance remarked could lose a layman in an inescapable maze of abstractions, technicalities and statistics.

The four-campus college will go ahead with physical expansion plans and is considering expanding program offerings as Nunney has assumed a no-nonsense, take-charge position.

OCC is developing a Southfield campus, a \$15 million Royal Oak Campus, and is considering a new Madison Heights campus. The school is also considering adding 12 to 15 new vocational-technical programs over the next three years.

"WE'RE READY to start growing again," Nunney said. But he was quick to add that Hill's planning was responsible for OCC's success.

"Under Joe Hill, we were retrenching before anybody was thinking about it," Nunney said. In the decade-long Hill tenure, OCC cut its overall staff from 700 to 600 and its administrative staff from 85 to 28.

"There's no more fat in this

institution as far as I'm concerned," Nunney said.

The interim president, who had been the college's chief labor negotiator during Hill's administration, said achieving an efficient, effective college management system, "required a lot of 'no' statements."

His actions as OCC's chief bargainer, according to some insiders, earned Nunney a reputation as "Hill's hatchet man." His appointment to fill the "temporary" vacancy, caused by Hill's heart attack and stroke six months ago, has also caused some dissent among the college's six major unions.

In spite of his reputation and and angry opposition from two board of trustees members, Nunney said he would continue Hill's programs and plans. It appears, however, that some changes will be made.

"OUR WEAKNESS is PR," Nunney said.

Hill, though hailed by many as an educational genius, held OCC apart from the rest of the state's educational community.

"Joe Hill tried to get the college to stay in a proper academic vein," Nunney said. "He devoted all his attention toward developing excellence in academic and vocational programs."

In spite of a self-imposed isolation, the college has achieved international acclaim with an unusual educational

system—"cognitive style."

Cognitive style calls for an analysis of the student to find out how he or she learns best—through lectures, reading assignments or audio-visual aids, for example. Students can then try to gear all their study to the method that is the most successful.

Hill and Nunney were the innovators.

Hill, the statistician and mathematician, devised the concepts and Nunney worked to implement them.

THE HILL-NUNNEY team goes back nearly 20 years to when the two were with Wayne State University. Hill was the assistant dean in the college of education; Nunney an assistant professor.

"We were both really hot for an innovation to truly individualize instruction in our schools," Nunney said.

The team was temporarily broken up when the British-born Nunney was tapped to head a Peace Corps training program in the mid-60s. Hill went on to become dean of WSU's graduate school.

Nunney was given the seemingly impossible task of teaching Peace Corps volunteers destined for African service to speak Swahili in 300 instructional hours.

"They wanted them to sing our national anthem in Swahili when they got off the plane in Africa," Nunney recalled.

"It wasn't a Berlitz course," he said, "but it was intensive instruction. It occurred to me that if you could individualize instruction, you could get people to speak Swahili in only 300 hours."

Nunney's efforts with the Peace Corps led to positions with Litton Industries and the U.S. Office of Education. In each position, he had a hand in further developing individualized instruction.

When Hill and Nunney teamed up again at OCC, they implemented a new program for individualized instruction. It abolished traditional classroom teaching in favor of a system relying on audio tapes.

"IT WORKED beautifully for some, but it was terrible for others. More people were failing than passing. For some, no, for most, it was a complete waste of time," Nunney said.

From there Nunney and Hill refined the approach to the present system.

"The bottom line is that when you go out into that very real world you need to know how to read and write. Our culture really demands it of us," he said.

"Some people just refuse to admit that people can learn to read and write without books."

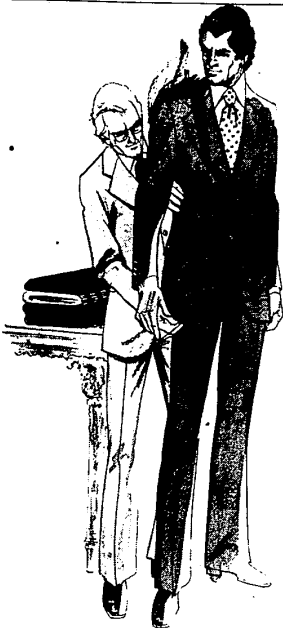
"But there's nothing wrong with it. The kids do it all the time—look at 'Sesame Street' and 'Electric Company'."

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Snowmobile drivers should learn laws

Snowmobiling has become one of the most popular outdoor winter sports in Michigan. As the sport has grown, said Atty. Gen. Frank Kelley, laws and ordinances have been enacted to protect participants and also to protect public and private property from damage.

The first thing you have to do before you begin snowmobiling is register your machine. The registration process is similar to that for an automobile and is for the same reason—to prevent theft.

After registering your snowmobile with the Secretary of State, make sure it is in good working order. State law requires that all snowmobiles have at least one headlight, one taillight, adequate brakes, and a muffler in good working order, said Kelley.

If you are over 16, you do not need an operating license of any kind to use a properly registered and equipped snowmobile.

Those ages 12-16, must either be accompanied by an adult, have in their possession a snowmobile safety certi-

cate, or be operating the snowmobile solely on land owned or controlled by the operator's parent or guardian.

Those under age 12 are prevented by law from operating a snowmobile except on land owned or controlled by parent or guardian.

Snowmobile safety certificates can be obtained after successfully completing a safety training program offered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and many county sheriff's departments, said Kelley.

With some exceptions, it is illegal to operate a snowmobile on a public highway; and any time there is an accident between a car or truck and a snowmobile on a public highway, the driver of the snowmobile will be presumed to have been at fault.

A snowmobile may be operated on the right-of-way or shoulder of all public highways except limited access highways such as I-75, said Kelley.

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